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Victory

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Victory

During January, 1865, Sherman, at Savannah, prepared to move his troops north through the Carolinas. He and Grant hoped in this way to catch Lee at Richmond in a trap. Thus, while Canby advanced on Mobile in the south, Sherman moved north to meet Grant and end the war.

Sherman's army began to file out of Savannah on January 19, each corps taking up position for the general advance to begin on February 1. Pushing north, they waded swamps and slogged along muddy roads, as the rains fell almost constantly. General Joseph E. Johnston had been given the hopeless task of stopping Sherman. The army met with more resistance than it had in Georgia, but it easily pushed aside most of the attacks. Sherman's "bummers" were now so experienced in war that they needed little guidance. At one place, when the 15th Iowa was met by a force of enemy cavalry and infantry while crossing a swollen stream, the regiment formed without orders and drove the attackers away.

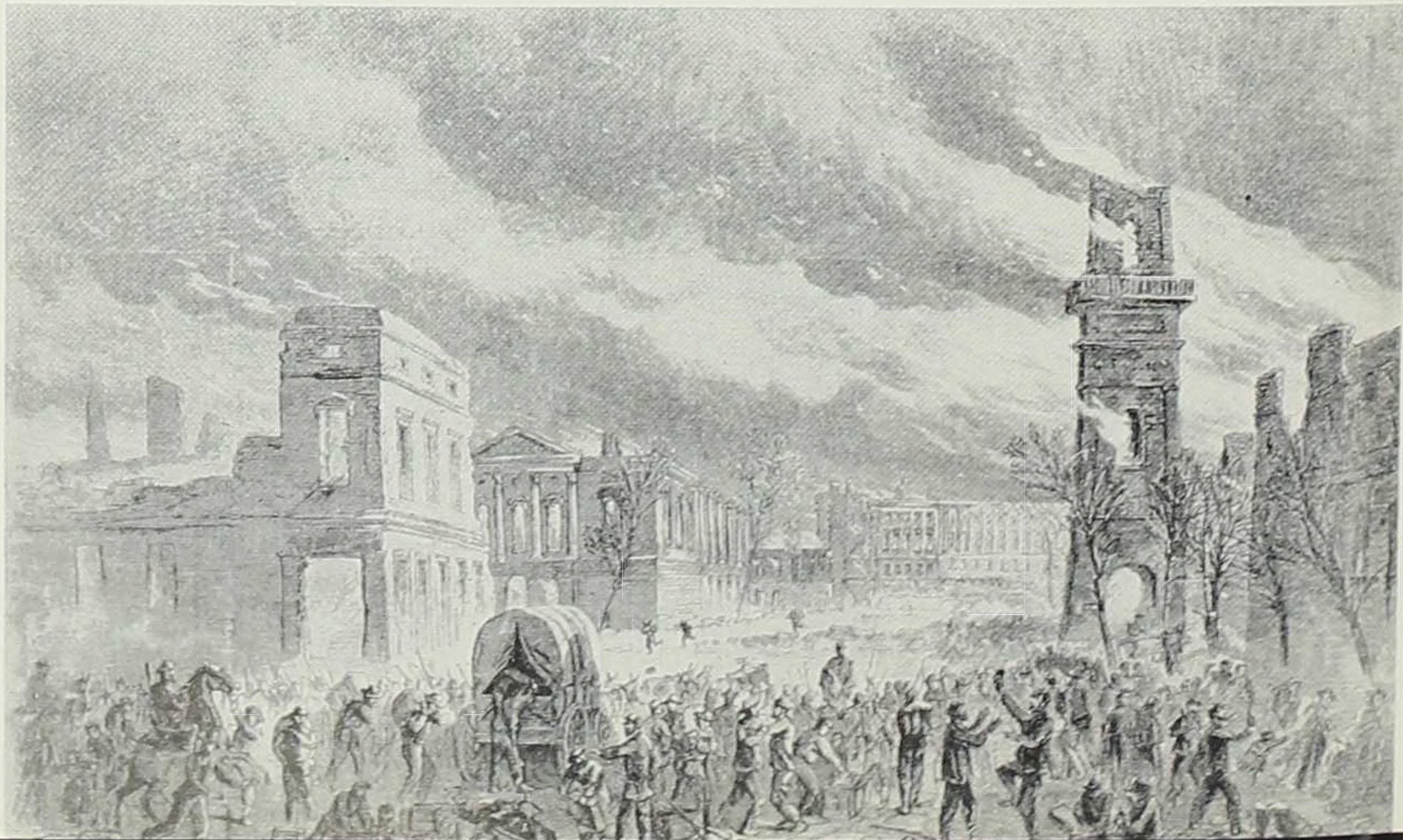
At another crossing the 2nd Iowa had to wade a creek some four feet deep. Stripping off their clothing, the men tied their cartridge boxes around their necks, attached their uniforms to the points

of their bayonets, and waded across. On the opposite side, before they had time to dress, they were hit by a group of rebel cavalry. Unperturbed, and with a yell, "naked as they were, they charged and routed the oncoming Rebels."

General Howard liked to tell the story of the taking of an important railroad. Approaching the road, Howard was deploying his men for a fight when one of his foragers, mounted on an old white horse with a rope for a bridle and only a blanket for saddle, approached at a full gallop. With the customary informality of the men of the Army of the Tennessee, the forager shouted, "Hurry up, general; we have got the railroad!" Sherman commented on this story: "So, while we, the generals, were proceeding deliberately to prepare for a serious battle, a parcel of our foragers, in search of plunder, had got ahead and actually captured the South Carolina Railroad, a line of vital importance to the rebel Government."

The Burning of Columbia

Harper's Weekly, April 8, 1865



The high point of the march through the Carolinas was the capture and burning of Columbia, South Carolina. Considered the heart of the rebellion, Columbia was a special objective for the men of Sherman's army. As they approached the city on February 17, Justin C. Kennedy of Mount Vernon, lieutenant colonel of the 13th Iowa, with a few of his men, crossed the river in an old boat, marched into the city and hoisted the flag of the 13th Iowa on the capitol building.

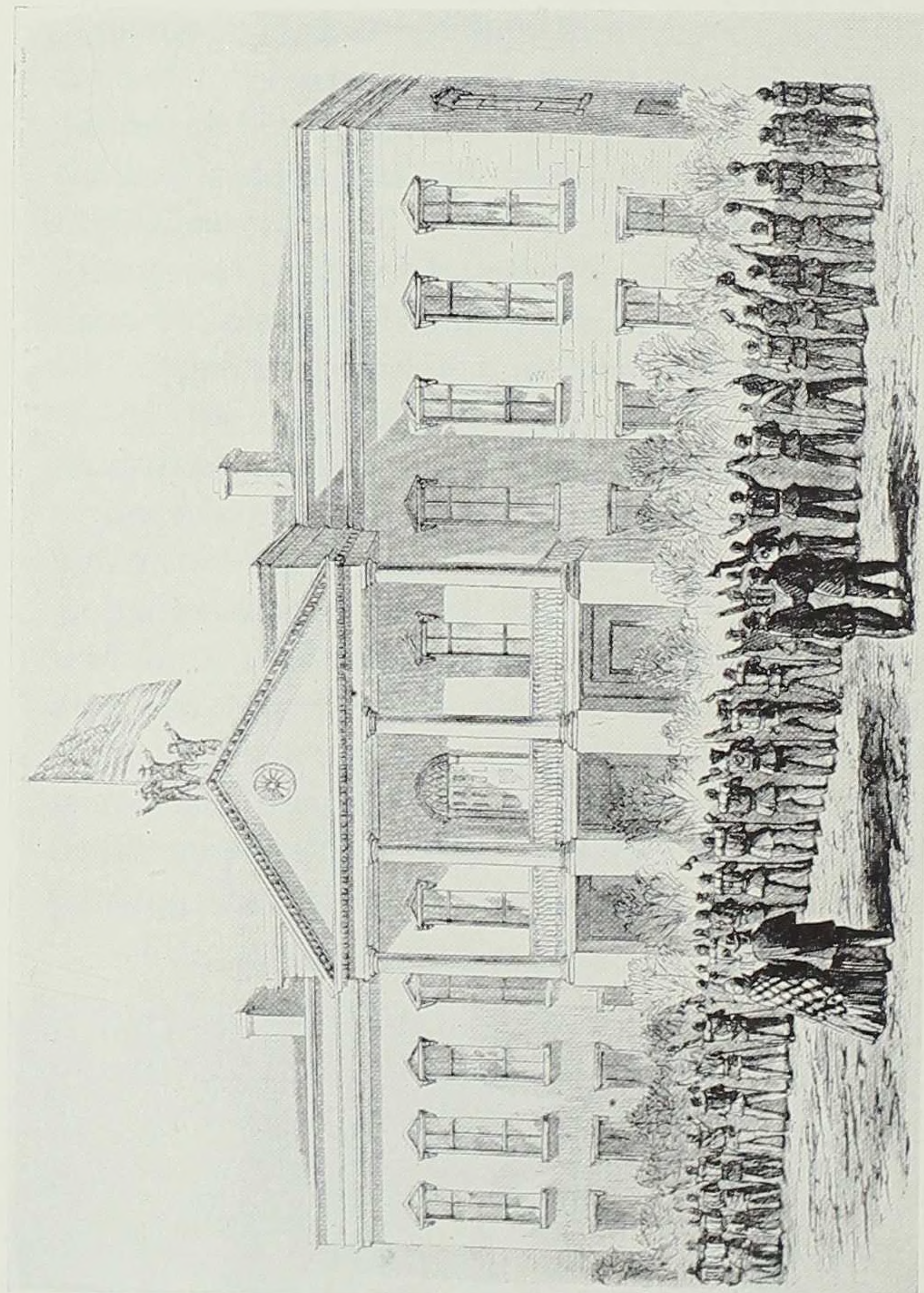
When Sherman's army marched into Columbia, they found great piles of cotton bales burning, set on fire by Wade Hampton's retreating Confederates. Members of the "Iowa Brigade," consisting of the 4th, 9th, 25th, 30th, and 31st Iowa, were trying to put out the flames, but with little success.

Crowds of people, both white and black, met Sherman as he rode into the city. While he talked to them, a group of men approached, pushing

Byers Giving Sherman Copy of Poem at Columbia

Harper's Weekly, April 8, 1865





Harper's Weekly, April 8, 1865

Iowans Raising Flag on Capitol at Columbia

through the crowd. They were Union officers who had been captured and imprisoned at Columbia. One of these men, S. H. M. Byers, adjutant of the 5th Iowa, had been captured at Missionary Ridge and had spent fifteen months in Confederate prisons. He thrust a paper into Sherman's hand, and when the general had time to read it he found the original copy of Byers' famous "Sherman's March to the Sea." Impressed with the poem, Sherman put Byers on his staff until he could send him to Washington for discharge. That day in Columbia, Byers and his fellow-prisoners, with tears of joy in their eyes, watched Sherman's army march through the city.

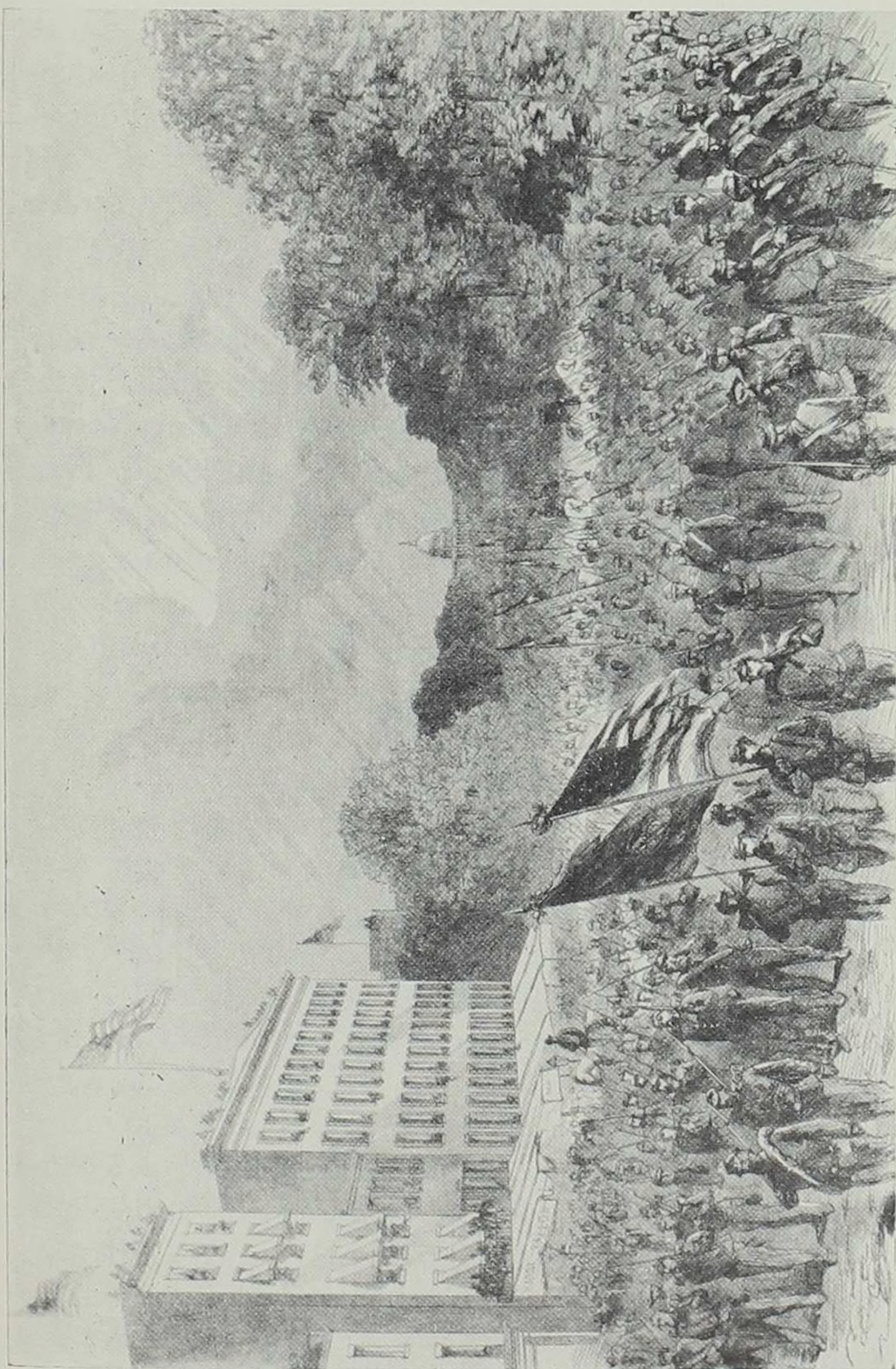
During the day a high wind came up and scattered sparks from the burning cotton over the city. The Union soldiers fought through the night, trying to stem the spreading fires, but at daylight most of the city lay in ruins. This fire was blamed on Sherman by the Confederacy, but an investigation after the war exonerated him.

Johnston had gathered some 40,000 men to oppose Sherman. Two battles, one at Averysboro and one at Bentonville in mid-March, disposed of this opposition, however, and Sherman continued his steady march northward. On March 23 he reached Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he left his army and proceeded to City Point to see Grant. Lincoln was there also, and, together with the President, the two generals planned the final

moves that would end the war. Sherman then returned to his army, prepared to move out on April 10. But on April 6 news came that Richmond and Petersburg had fallen to Grant. Then, two days after Sherman had moved out toward Raleigh, another message from Grant told of the surrender of Lee at Appomattox Court House on April 9. "A little more labor, a little more toil on our part," Sherman told his army, "and the great race is won." Without hesitating, he moved on Raleigh, reaching that city on April 13.

The following day a flag of truce came from Johnston, asking for terms of surrender. While Sherman negotiated with his old antagonist, a third message reached him. Lincoln had been assassinated. Fearing the reaction of his army to this news, Sherman kept it from them until he had met Johnston. After a truce of some days, Johnston signed Sherman's surrender terms at Durham Station on April 26. The war was indeed over.

The march resumed, and on May 24, 1865, Sherman's mighty army paraded in the Grand Review in Washington. At 9 A. M. that morning Sherman and Howard rode out at the head of their men, down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House. Meade's Army of the Potomac had marched in review the day before; Sherman was eager for his men to make a good impression also. As he rode he looked back at his army.



Harper's Weekly, June 10, 1865

The Grand Review in Washington

"The sight was simply magnificent," he wrote later. "The column was compact, and the glittering muskets looked like a solid mass of steel, moving with the regularity of a pendulum." For six and one-half hours, the men of the Western Army marched past the reviewing stand "like the lords of the world," as one observer put it.

Fifteen Iowa regiments took part in that review — the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th, 25th, 26th, 30th, 31st, and 39th of Logan's 15th Army Corps, plus one lone company of the shattered 17th Iowa; the 11th, 13th, 15th, and 16th, in Blair's 17th Army Corps.